

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT : MUHAMMAD ALI VISIT

1. U.S. BOXER MUHAMMAD ALI'S FIVE-DAY VISIT TO BANGLADESH STARTING FEBRUARY 18, 1978, SURPASSED ALL VISITS OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES OR STATE HEADS TO THIS COUNTRY IN RECENT PAST, IN TERMS OF WIDE COVERAGE BY MEDIA. NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS STARTED FRONT PAGE DISPLAY OF ALI'S VISIT WELL AHEAD OF THE EVENT. GOVERNMENT MANAGED BDTIMES EXPRESSED ENTHUSIASM OF PEOPLE IN A FRONT PAGE PICTURE-CAPTION: "WITH PMSTERS, FESTOONS AND BUNTINGS SPLASHING ALL OVER DACCA, CAPITAL OF WORLD'S SEVENTH LARGEST NATION IS IN GRIP OF MUHAMMAD ALI FEVER AND IS ANXIOUSLY WAITING TO GREET 'HERO OF RING' TODAY."

2. BD PRESS REFLECTED SHOCK OF BANGLADESHIS AT THE 'UNEXPECTED DEFEAT' OF MUHAMMAD ALI SIDE BY SIDE WITH EAGER AWAITING FOR ARRIVAL OF BOXING HERO. BDOBSERVER (FEB.17) FRONTED 2/C HEADLINE: "ALI DETHRONED." BDTIMES PUBLISHED FRONTPAGE REPORT WITH HEADING "WAVES UNCLASSIFIED

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OF SHOCK" AS REACTION OF PUBLIC ON ALI'S DEFEAT TO INEXPERIENCED LEON SPINKS IN LAS VEGAS FIGHT PRIOR TO ALI'S DEPARTURE FOR BANGLADESH. ALL DAILIES FRONTED ITEM. MPOST (FEB.18) MADE SECOND HEAD 2/C HEADLINE: "MASSIVE WELCOME AWAITS ALI." BIOGRAPHICAL RELEASE ISSUED BY USIS WAS USED BY MOST. DBANGLA MADE 5/C BOX WITH CAPTION "TIRED BUTTERFLY", GIVING A CHRONOLOGICAL

REPORT ON ALI'S BOXING CAREER.

3. MOST PAPER MADE LEAD ITEMS WITH HEADLINES: "WELCOME MUHAMMAD ALI" ON HIS ARRIVAL-DAY (FEB.18). AZAD CAME OUT WITH BIG, SPECIAL-TYPE 3/C LEAD: "GREATEST BOXER OF ALL TIMES, REMARKABLE WORLD PERSONALITY MUHAMMAD ALI COMING TODAY." TWO COLUMN PICTURE OF ALI ACCOMPANIED STORY. WITH WELCOME REPORT, MOST PUBLISHED EDITS WELCOMING 'BOXING HERO' AND CONSOLING HIM ON HIS LATEST DEFEAT. ALI'S ARRIVAL REPORT ALONG WITH NUMEROUS PICTURES WAS MADE LEAD NEWS BY ALL DAILIES. TV ARRANGED SPECIAL MORNING TRANSMISSION FOR DIRECT COVERAGE OF ALI'S ARRIVAL. RADIO ALSO ARRANGED ON-THE-SPOT RUNNING COMMENTARY. ALI'S AIRPORT STATEMENT SAYING, "I WILL REGAIN TITLE IN SIX MONTHS" TOPPED THE HEADINGS ON HIS DACCA ARRIVAL. SOME HEADLINED "DACCA ACCORDS TUMULTUOUS WELCOME TO MUHAMMAD ALI." ARRIVAL REPORTS ALSO INCLUDED AIRPORT INTERVIEWS OF ALI'S MOTHER MRS. CLAY SAYING, "I AM PROUD OF MY SON" AND HIS WIFE MRS. VERONICA SAYING, "HE IS A GIANT". WERE PROMCARRIED WIDEST NEWS AND PICTORIAL COVERAGE OF ALI'S ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION WAS GIVEN BY DBANGLA WITH FULL UPPER-HALF OF FRONT PAGE GIVEN TO RELATED ITEMS AND PICTURES. IT'S BIG-TYPE HEADLINE READ: "ALI CAME AND ALI CONQUERED."

4. DURING MUHAMMAD ALI'S FIVE-DAY STAY IN BANGLADESH,
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DAILIES AND WEEKLIES WERE FLOODED WITH NEWS ITEMS, PICTURES AND COMMENTS ON THE U.S. BOXER'S ACTIVITIES IN DACCA, CHITTAGONG AND SYPHET. BD PRESIDENT'S CONFERRING 'CITIZENSHIP' ON ALI WAS PROMCARRIED. RELIGIOUS ORIENTED SANGRAM (FEB. 19) LED WITH 4/C HEADLINE: "PRIDE OF MUSLIM WORLD MUHAMMAD ALI BECOMES CITIZEN OF BANGLADESH." DACCA CIVIC RECEPTION WAS ALSO MADE LEAD BY ALL. SANGRAM MADE A 4/C LEAD, ALI SAYING IN RECEPTION, "SUCCESS IN MY LIFE WAS DUE TO THE COMPLETE FAITH ON ALLAH." AZAD LED ON THE OCCASION QUOTING HOST OFFICIALS SAYING, "SYMPATHIZER OF MANKIND MUHAMMAD ALI, YOU ARE OUR PRIDE." ALI'S STATEMENT SAYING HE "WILL STAY TWO MONTHS A YEAR IN HIS COX'S BAZAR HOME" WAS PROMCARRIED.

5. ALL PAPERS WERE FLOODED WITH PICTURES DURING ALI'S VISIT. SOME PUBLISHED PHOTO-FEATURES WITH UP TO 10 PICTURES ON ALI'S DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES.

6. COMMENTS IN FORM OF EDITORIALS AND SPECIAL EDITPAGE COLUMNS WERE WIDELY PUBLISHED BY MEDIA. DBANGLA AND AZAD IN THEIR EDITORIAL WELCOMING ALI SAID THAT WHETHER ALI LOSES OR WINS IN BOXING MATCHES, CANNOT AFFECT ON HIS

WORLD FAMOUS PERSONALITY. BDOBSERVER SAID IN ITS EDIT
(FEB.18): "YES, MUHAMMAD ALI HAS LOST TO HIS RIVAL AND HE
COULD NOT SAY WHEN HE WAS MEETING HIM AGAIN. BUT MUHAMMAD
ALI HAS MADE HISTORY IN MORE FIELDS THAN ATHLETICS -- OR
IN THE RING, AND THUS BECOME ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST TALKED-
ABOUT PERSONAPITIES."

7. LARGEST CIRCULATED ITTEFAQ (FEB.19) IN ITS FIRST
EDITORIAL SAID: "ALI'S RELIGIOUS EMOTIONS, AND HIS
ANTI-WAR ROLE AS WELL AS HIS ROLE IN DEVELOPING CONDITIONS
OF AMERICAN BLACK MUSLIMS HAS PROVED TIME AND AGAIN THAT
HE IS REALLY A LEGENDARY HERO."

8. POST COMMENT: ALI'S VISIT WAS THE BIGGEST THING TO HIT
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BANGLADESH IN MANY A DAY. ALTHOUGH TIRED FROM HIS FIGHT
AND THE LONG TRIP TO DACCA, ALI WAS FRIENDLY AND PERSONABLE
AND APPARENTLY MADE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON EVERYONE. FROM
A PUBLIC RELATIONS VIEWPOINT, ALI IS A WINNER; AMERICA
CANNOT HELP BUT BENEFIT FROM THE GOODWILL AND EXTENSIVE
FAVORABLE PUBLICITY ENGENDERED BY THE VISIT.
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